Forty Days of the Risen Life

Boyd Carpenter

BT
485
C295
1898
GTU
Storage

Pacific School of
Religion
Berkeley, Calif.

Little Books on Religion

Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, LL.D.

FORTY DAYS OF THE RISEN LIFE

Other Volumes in this Series.

Gospel Questions and Answers.
By JAMES DENNEY, D.D.

The Unity and Symmetry of the Bible.
By JOHN MONRO GIBSON, M.A., D.D.

Four Psalms.
By GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

Christ and the Future Life.
By R. W. DALE, LL.D.

The Seven Words from the Cross.
By W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, LL.D.

The Visions of a Prophet;
STUDIES IN ZECHARIAH.
By MARCUS DODS, D.D.

The Four Temperaments.
By ALEXANDER WHYTE.

Why be a Christian?
By MARCUS DODS, D.D.

The Upper Room.
By JOHN WATSON (Ian Maclaren).

OTHERS TO FOLLOW.

FORTY DAYS OF THE RISEN LIFE

BY

BOYD CARPENTER

BISHOP OF RIPON

NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

1898

BT
485
.C295
1898

FSH
C227

Copyright, 1898,
By Dodd, Mead and Company.

University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A.

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	The Gospel of the Twilight	1
II.	The Shattering of Hopes	11
III.	The Moods of Sorrow . .	27
IV.	The Aim of Comfort . .	50
V.	The Consistent Inconsistency of Love	62
VI.	Manifold are Love's Ways	77
VII.	Grace sanctions and sanctifies Natural Ties . .	88

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/fortydaysofrisen0000boyd

FORTY DAYS OF THE RISEN LIFE

Forty Days of the Risen Life

I

THE GOSPEL OF THE TWILIGHT

THERE is within the Gospels a gospel of special tenderness, a gospel which appeals with peculiar power to those who are weighted with the burdens of doubt and sorrow. Wherever, indeed, Christ is, there also is His voice, saying, "Come unto Me, all that are heavy laden;" but if we would see Christ ministering with grave wisdom and

effective tenderness to those upon whose spirits the shadows have fallen, let us open the story of the Risen Christ. There He appears a tender minister to the perplexed and sorrowful — to those who feel the burden of belief and the burden of the loss of belief, whose hearts are smitten with the sense of life's loneliness, and to whom the empty place where love once dwelt has become an intolerable void.

Adaptation, not Reserve.

Jesus Christ had, indeed, no esoteric gospel. He was no Gnostic; He encouraged no vain and conceited notion of a teaching

which was reserved for the intellectually *élite*. What He had to tell was the truth of God — God's love, God's righteousness, God's healing — open to all, taught to all without reserve, without money and without price. What there was to teach was to be taught to all nations, to every creature under heaven, without restriction, frankly and fully. But though there is no esoteric doctrine in Christianity, yet is there an esoteric teaching, for the kingdom of heaven is within; and its teachings are the teachings of the spirit given to each man. Those teachings

cannot be received by deputy. Man vainly tries to teach them to his brother man. He may tell them glad tidings, but he cannot teach them. Christianity is not esoteric, if by esoteric is meant that it has some reserve doctrine; but Christianity is the most esoteric of all religions if we consider that it sets forth the need of an inward and spiritual teaching which lies beyond human art and skill to impart. Only spirit can teach spirit. Only God's Spirit can teach effectively. The promise of the new covenant is "They shall be all taught of God." While, therefore, Jesus Christ

had no reserve in His teaching, He yet taught as only He could teach.

And in the story of His appearances after His resurrection we have types of His method of teaching. It is like, yet unlike, His teaching in the days before the passion. It is like, for the love, the thoughtfulness, the skill is the same; it is like, for it is still tenderly adapted to character; but it is unlike, for there is more quietness, a more deeply personal element in it. It is a gospel of the twilight. It is like teaching heard in calm and cool hours. The turmoil of the

world seems far away. The roar is heard, but heard only as a sound afar off. The fierce noontide heat and glare are softened to our senses. If the gospel is the same, it is a gospel told in gentle voice as of one speaking low and clear in the hour of softened light, or as one who whispers comfort in a darkened chamber to bereaved hearts. The hour is propitious; the burden and heat of the day are gone. The voice which speaks tells of possibilities which in full daylight hours we do not think of or care for. The unseen world seems to come nearer. The

voice which speaks is the same familiar voice, yet it speaks from the other side of the grave. As it speaks we mark how varying phenomena may be united in common principle. We begin to understand that variety of experience is not hostile to unity of guidance. We perceive that there is one who is the same to all, and who yet comes differently to each. His love is changeless and impartial, and His wisdom is the wisdom which reads individual needs. He can recognise the idiosyncrasies of men as well as show himself alive to their common wants.

It is the gospel of the twilight. The messages spoken are messages of love and wisdom to sad and troubled souls, and moreover they are messages spoken at a time when they are most welcome and most needful. It is the time "when thoughts of guilt come heaviest on the soul," when the quietness enables us to think more clearly, and to perceive more vividly the significance of our failures. It is the hour when loneliness is felt to be most lonely. It is the hour when the light is clear of cloud — soothing yet tender, and as it were lovingly veiled for the

sake of weeping eyes. And it is such an hour which reveals that, though dead, the real, risen Christ may come to many hearts with varying method but the same changeless love and helpfulness.

And thus in the story of the Forty Days, and in the manifestations of our Lord during them we have pictures of the way in which the Lord of life dealt with those whose hopes had been shattered, whose hearts had been grief-smitten, who had gone through an agony of doubt, bewilderment, bereavement, and self-reproach. This twilight gospel becomes

thus a gospel for the troubled. In its quiet and peace-giving incidents we hear the echo of the same voice which spoke those immortal words in the upper chamber before He suffered, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

II

THE SHATTERING OF HOPES

THE three days between Gethsemane and the first Easter Day brought to the Disciples experiences which changed their whole life. We cannot enter into the significance of the story which follows unless we bear in mind the startling and searching ordeal to which they had been subjected. Their Master passed through the grave and gate of death. They, too, in a sense, were buried with

Him. They were as those who had passed through the Valley of Shadows.

Broken Dreams.

They had been cherishing dreams, which those few days destroyed. Nothing is so hard to disturb as the notions and associations which have grown up with us. Ideas come to us at first through concrete forms. As we recall these ideas, we recall also the vivid pictures with which they were first associated in our minds. The imaginations with their early colouring hover round our thoughts till some strange, perhaps heart-breaking experience

dashes them in pieces. We know well what were the imaginings with which the Disciples associated the idea of the kingdom of heaven. The notion of the coming kingdom had in their minds its dazzling drapery of worldly and material pomp. In their earliest days the dream of the Messiah's kingdom had taken this form. In their first intercourse with our Lord this form of the kingdom still hung in their thoughts. Their anticipations of His triumph took the colouring of their early dreams; it could hardly be otherwise; and even the clear and reiterated teaching of their Master

concerning a kingdom which was within and spiritual, failed wholly to dispel their mistaken imaginations. The pictures had been so early painted on their inmost fancy that the colours and forms persisted in showing themselves through whatever else was sketched or delineated before their minds. This persistency of early impressions shows itself, even after the resurrection of our Lord, in the question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.) But though these impressions thus lingered, the materialism of their conceptions

was rudely shaken by the death of Him whom they believed to be the Messiah. Their perplexity found expression in the plaintive utterance of almost abandoned hope. "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." Whatever else was shown to them in those wondrous days of suspense and sorrow, they were taught that the fulfilment of their expectations was not necessarily through the continuance of things as they were, or the perpetuation of their materialistic dreams. They had seen the death of the King of the Jews — their trusted Messiah. This in

itself must have diverted their thoughts into new directions.

If their materialistic hopes thus received a blow, the same blow struck home also to their hearts through a deepened and intensified self-knowledge. Death has a wondrous power of appeal to our better nature. It reveals us to ourselves. It awakens our self-reproach, because it discloses to us our selfishness and our indolent neglect of the opportunities of love. However much we may have shown affection and tender ministration to our dear ones, a sort of reproach falls

Self-Revelation.

upon us when they have passed beyond our reach. We feel that we might have done more. We never value them as much as in the moment when they are no longer ours. If, as is too often the case, we have been unkind through heedlessness or harshness, then the moment of death brings a reproach which is dashed with bitter truth. Then the ministry, which in life looked so commonplace that it seemed a trifling thing to forego, appears to us as a sacred opportunity which only cruel hardness could have neglected. We can thus, perhaps, understand something

of what the death of Christ must have been to those who did indeed sincerely love Him, but who for that very reason would most realise how much more they might have done. Would not the perfume of Mary's gift linger with them and its very fragrance bring a bitter reproach? "She did it for my burial," Christ had said; and they, the others, who had seen more of Him and been admitted to even closer and more continuous fellowship, had done nothing except to weary Him with their contentions and to forsake Him in His extremity. What yearn-

ings for one more chance of showing their love must have been theirs? How often in those three days must they have longed for the touch of the vanished hand or the right and power to say, "In spite of all our selfish blindness and heedlessness, we did love." For hearts thus riven with self-reproach, it would have seemed a sweet and heavenly joy to have been able to minister in the humblest way to Him! Ah! to have loosed the latchet of His shoes and to have washed His tired feet! But this they had lost the opportunity of doing; and His hands, the hands

which the nails had pierced, had, in that crowning hour of His sorrow, washed their feet.

Their memory and love in those three days must have wrought with educating power in their hearts. We can trace symptoms of this in the restlessness and the longing to be doing something which seems to have taken possession of them at times. It was as though they would fain shut out the memory of things too bitter to be borne. How can they endure to think of what they might have done and did not, or of what their faithlessness and

Educating Influence of Sorrow.

cowardice had done, adding bitterness to His cup of sorrow? Are we surprised to hear Simon Peter saying, "I go a-fishing"? or to listen to the prompt reply of men who feel something at least of what he feels: "We also go with thee"?

These men were men to whom a few short days had brought experiences which to others a lifetime might not bring. The one central power and support of their life had fallen. The One round whom their hopes had gathered, and whose sweet attractiveness had awakened deep and lasting affection, had passed into the land of shadows.

Where they had dreamed of triumph, there they had seen the vanishing of their dreams. Their Master had gone into the valley of humiliation instead of mounting the throne of His father David.

In encountering such an experience of loss and disappointment, a hundred problems started into life within their souls. Questions which they had been content to leave unanswered, believing that the future held an abundant and satisfactory answer, now clamoured for reply. Had the Messiah come? Had their faith been based on a delusion?

Had their hearts been drawn by One who was after all just as other men? Was the love which they had allowed to stream towards Him all in vain? And even more heart-confounding was the thought of the love which flowed from Him to them. Was it as a brook which sparkled and refreshed for a moment, and had then dried up into silence beneath the burning sunshine? Had the moral beauty and heavenly dignity of that wondrous life no permanent meaning? They had not apprehended all His teaching, but the shock of these few days had caused many fancy-

built edifices to tumble down; and they began dimly to see that His teaching had touched ranges of spiritual thought which their materialism of view had veiled from them. The outlines of the real spiritual kingdom of God began to loom upon them, casting as yet shadows upon their perplexed hearts. They perceived, however, that there were realities other than those to which they had looked forward. There was a kingdom of moral beauty of which the life and the death of their Lord had made them sensible. But as yet all seemed confused. Their sight was but

half restored. Living realities were as yet but as trees walking. In their spirits, the sense of loss, the reversal of their expectations, the sorrow of their hearts, the consciousness of life's greater things, the revelation of their own weakness, loneliness, perplexity, heartache, and remorse contended together. Active work might silence the tumult of those voices. They turned to their old familiar nets as to a refuge from experiences which had wrought bewilderment. They had tasted elevation and depression, lofty dreams and profound disappointment, strong

attachments and humiliating self-knowledge; they would handle their fishing tackle and find solace in their ancient handicraft. As yet, Christ was not fully known to them; but He was no mere dead man. The force of His life was to them a real force; and some had said that He was alive, and some of them had seen Him. But all was not yet clear. Thought was too painful, for it led to no definite result. The meaning of their life was not unfolded. There was one thing they could do. They were fishermen. They would resume their occupation.

III

THE MOODS OF SORROW

"MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," cried Job, in his sorrow. The world has echoed the thought, if not the saying. Trouble is too common not to have found expression in every age and among every people. It has been a common practice to bring together quotations from poets, philosophers, and great men of all nations and times to establish the truth of the

reign of sorrow; as if the thing needed proving which every human heart, sooner or later, knows without proof.

But though trouble is common to all, the effects of trouble are not the same in all. Trouble may evoke tears in some, but anger and fierce impatience in others. It bewilders some spirits, and for many days after the blow has fallen they walk as in a dream. Others are startled; fearfulness and a horrible dread take hold upon them. In some it begets scepticism; in others an eagerness for some refuge of faith. And there is yet another class,

who seemed to suffer little change; and yet the change when recognised is most sadly significant. They go about work and duty as before; but for them, ever after, life's music is set in a lower key.

It is not the least interesting part of the story of the Forty Days that it exhibits to us the different effects of the same sorrow upon different classes. All those who are brought prominently on the scene had loved Christ. His death was the loss of a friend who had filled a large place in their lives and had found His way into their hearts. Here then

are people prostrated by a common bereavement; but in what varied forms does sorrow show itself among them?

The ministry to sorrow is no easy thing. The cheap and mechanical repetition of truths, however tender and noble, will not touch the heart or stay its pitiful or indignant throb. Men are alike; and yet how different! We need to know what is common to men, but we need also to have some skill in what is special to types of men if we would track the source of tears and staunch them at their fount. It is just because this narrative of the

risen Lord shows us the Christ ministering to the different moods of sorrow, and proving Himself master and healer of all, that this gospel of the twilight has its special message to the sorrowful.

And first, then, let us see the moods of sorrow as they are set forth in the narrative. Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping. It is a very ordinary type. Here is sorrow in its simplest form — tears and a great heart-hunger with a wistful hope that the cloud may prove to be a dream-cloud after all. And yet here we

Wistful Sorrow.

know there were certain special emotions which were due to personal memories and experiences. Christ had done for Mary that which none other had done. He had given her back her life to live again. Out of the last state, which was worse than the first, He had delivered her. He had given her back, instead of recklessness, a new reverence for life. He had anchored her spirit to a surer anchorage, and filled her spirit with the flame of a love so pure and lofty that it had burnt out the refuse of lower and baser affections. To her sorrowing heart,

carrying the remembrance of the marvellous moral resurrection which had taken place in her own life, the total passing away of Him who had been life indeed to her was almost unthinkable. She could not believe that He was gone even when she carried the spices and ointments to do the last offices for the dead. And yet He was dead: she had seen Him die; and when she found the sepulchre empty, her heart revolted at the thought that other than loving hands should be laid upon the sacred casket which held a life so dear. How human the story is! How

natural too that when the men went away, satisfied that nothing more could be done, the woman should still linger at the spot, reluctant to accept the inevitable, and finding a flower of hope on the ground which reason had pronounced to be barren. And so Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping.

Despondent Sorrow.

The mood which Thomas showed in the hour of sorrow is in striking contrast to that of Mary. With her there is tenderness, yearning of heart, a reluctance to believe the worst, a dread of the touch of stranger hands. With Thomas there seems a

sort of hardness born of despondency, a closing of the heart to the softer feelings, a sullen acceptance of the loss as the inevitable fate of all the objects of admiration and affection. She was unwilling to release her hold on what was so dear, and was reluctant to believe the worst. He fiercely thrust away hope and refused to believe other than the worst. Love takes opposing forms and yet remains love. Sometimes it is tearful, tender, wistful, as was Mary's. At other times it is obstinately hopeless and bitterly incredulous, as in the case of Thomas. It is then misun-

derstood. This hard, sullen temper wears no semblance of a broken heart. We associate with it rather sobs and tears and desolated looks, as its usual vesture. But sorrow may freeze as well as dissolve the spirit. All the sceptical activities of the mind are summoned to the side of the disappointed heart, which is ready to take a sullen interest in pessimistic views. So Thomas will refuse to credit the news which his heart longs to find true. He will fight against any chance of fresh disappointment. That he could not endure. If he is to give way to joyfulness of heart

again he will have solid arguments, yes, indubitable proofs. "Except I see — except I touch, I will not believe." It is not the most pleasing form of grief; but we shall wrong it if we do not see that sorrow sometimes turns the spirit rigid as though frostbound. We shall miss the lesson of the story if we cannot read love beneath the hard and unyielding demeanour of Thomas.

Remorseful Sorrow.

Different, again, is the attitude of Peter in this time of trouble. With him trouble brought more than loss. A deep and indelible self-reproach mingled with

his sorrow. A look in which all the boundless love and tenderness of the past and the unutterable pity and sorrow of the present found expression, must have haunted him during those three days. And Peter acts as a man who carries with him an unappeased remorse. We notice his restlessness; he cannot quietly wait; inaction is impossible; at the first news of a resurrection he must run to the sepulchre. No awe restrains his restless impetuosity. He enters the sepulchre; he eagerly surveys all that is to be seen. While doubt still remains, he is afraid to find that

true which, nevertheless, he longs to know is true. His spirit, torn with self-reproach, dreads to meet the Master to whom he has been false, whom yet he loves so truly. He cannot endure inaction; he must be doing something. "I go a-fishing." And when in the dim dawn, John whispers to him of the lonely figure which stands on the shore, "It is the Lord," the necessity to be doing something grows fierce within him. The hour of the inevitable meeting with his forsaken Lord has come. He feels the Master's eye is upon him once more. He dreads to meet it. He will

lessen self-consciousness in activity. In a moment he is over the ship's side and is busily at work dragging the net to shore. Only fierce absorbing activity will allay the fever of tumultuous joy and agonising self-reproach and nervous dread which torments him. The hour of sorrow finds him a restless, heart-stricken, and remorseless man to whom quiet thought is torture, and movement a necessary relief.

Can we form any clear view of the manner in which John met this great sorrow? The materials are not plentiful, but there is enough to enable us to

trace in outline the demeanour of the Beloved Disciple at the time. He had been at the Cross till the end, or nearly so. He accepted the precious legacy which Christ had left him. He had taken charge of the mother of the Lord. Already we trace the growing quietude of John's demeanour. He had been called one of the Boanerges. He had had his impulsive moods; he had felt fierce resentment for his Master's sake, when he fain would have called down fire from heaven. But he had lived near to the quiet, calm, loving heart of his Master. Something of the calm which belonged to

the depth of Christ's nature had passed upon him. He had begun to drink of the fountain of life; more deeply than the others he had drunk into the spirit of his Master; and with these draughts had come something of the calm of a more restful faith. Nothing which was of God could finally be overthrown. Perplexity and bewilderment might be experiences by the way; but was there not a well-built dwelling-place which no storm could overthrow? (Matt. vii. 35.) And so without restlessness, though sore of heart, John devotes himself to the task which Christ had

given him. This at least can be done. The Master's will may be fulfilled though the Master's eyes have closed in death. But the quietness of John is not the quietness of crushed natural feeling. He can respond to the suggestions of hope and loving curiosity. With Peter, when the rumour of the empty sepulchre is brought, he can run to the sepulchre, and his young feet bring him there first. But once there, an awe touches his soul. This is the spot where his Master lay. Here they had placed Him after death. The reverent dread which love feels for the spot, the form, the relics

of those who are gone, is upon him. He reaches the place; yet went he not in. Only when the stronger soul had led the way did John venture in with sinking and awe-touched heart. He shrank from doing anything which seemed to violate the sanctity of that resting-place; but when Peter, eager to probe the story to the bottom, entered without hesitation, then went in also that other Disciple which came first to the sepulchre; and he saw and believed. And now the quiet trust of his spirit is vindicated. It is true that the idea of a resurrection had not penetrated his mind, but he

had dwelt so near to his Master, he had so caught His spirit, that a filial confidence possessed him in the hour of loss. Love was over all. The Father of whom Christ had spoken was not dethroned because of the tragedy of the Cross. Love had given him work to do; but now that he had visited the empty sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, his trust was reassured. Nothing need surprise him. Any moment the Master might be in their midst again; and, therefore, the words he speaks to Peter in the boat sound as the words of one to whom there is

nothing surprising in the fact that his Lord should be near at hand. He first — because his heart was quicker in response and his repose of trust the calmer — he first, of the Disciples, recognises Jesus on the lakeside. "It is the Lord," he says, as though it was a natural and glad thing that he should be there. He more than any of the Disciples had risen into that region of trust which asks no supernatural evidence of that which is the most natural thing in the world — the nearness of the divine to the human. The deep trustfulness of John's spirit does not wholly

forsake him in the hour of supremest sorrow.

There are yet two more upon whom this sorrow had fallen with bewildering effect. More fully in some respects than with even the better known of the Disciples is the state of mind of the two Disciples who went to Emmaus made known to us. We are allowed to hear the free expression of their disappointments and of their doubts. They are men upon whom the loss has brought mental perplexity. Questions arose in their hearts. The ideas which they had formed had been

Perplexed Sorrow.

rudely shattered. The sorrow which brought to others desolation of heart, unsatisfied restlessness, obstinate incredulity, has occasioned them intellectual difficulty allied to a surprise and disappointment of hope. They had lost a friend; but they had lost One in whom all their future dreams had been centred. With His death came the question: "Have we been mistaken all along?" And yet, in one thing they could not be mistaken. The One whom they had known, loved, and followed had been "a prophet mighty in word and deed." The enigma of His life remained, and, in-

deed, was the greater because of His death. And so they exchange their confidences, ventilate their difficulties, and share their sadness as they leave the city of so many disappointments and perplexities behind them, little dreaming that along the road they trod the Christ whom they mourned was walking also. A sorrowful bewilderment was their portion in the time of trouble.

IV

THE AIM OF COMFORT

COMFORT is a word which in its common use has lost something of its original robustness. Comfort is regarded as something which calms the agitated and storm-swept heart. It is regarded as soothing rather than stimulating; but in its true meaning, comfort is something much nobler than the mere consoling of the troubled spirit. No doubt the mother comforts the child when she takes the

little weeping one on her knees and kisses away his tears as he lies in her soft, warm, sheltering arms. There is something analogous to this in divine comfort: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee." But the outlook of the divine comfort is even wider than this imagery suggests. With the earthly mother, pity and distress for the child's distress prompt her to embrace the crying child. With the divine comfort, there is always the look beyond the sorrow of the passing hour. There is the desire to fortify as well as to console, to strengthen the

heart as well as assuage the grief, to put the soul in the way of a victory over sorrow rather than in the way of escape from it. In all the divine comfort, there is a ministry of power to bear as well as consolation because of trouble. The divine Comforter binds up the broken in heart, but He seeks also to make the spirit brave to endure.

There is a bracing energy about divine comfort, then, which lifts it into a higher range than the mere pale negative soothing of soul which is commonly associated with the word. True comfort brings

fresh courage to the soul. It stimulates, arouses, invigorates, besides consoling the sorrowing heart.

This perhaps will be clearer to us if we try to remember what is the purpose of divine love towards human souls. Jesus Christ said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The work of the Divine Redeemer, then, is the pouring of the divine life into the human soul. To this end He sent His Spirit: "We have all been made to drink into one spirit." Indeed, the Apostle

What is Love's Aim?

uses bold language when he says: "That we may be filled with all the fulness of God." Our spirit life is strong according to the fulfilling of our spirits with this divine life. Then we are invigorated with a power which is not of this world. We become conscious that we have kinship with that which is above. We do not become less human, but more human; for our love becomes more tender, more unselfish, more wide. We become less worldly, because we regard all the incidents, attractions, ambitions — the wealth and honours for which men scramble — as in

no way essential to the best life. They may play their part as means to one end; but in themselves they have no necessary relationship to the higher and divine life. They may be used as agencies of experience in their giving or taking away. They are but tools in the graver's hands. They are but incidents and episodes on the way, bringing with them knowledge and enabling us to use and test the principles and the force of the divine life. The great purpose is never forgotten. The true life of souls is never found till they live by and in the divine life, taking in and using

its force freely, fully, hourly, not regarding the divine life as a casual and opportune help by the way, not finding it as the traveller in the desert might find a welcome well here and there in the sandy waste, but finding it constant, flowing ever at hand, as the Rock that followed Israel, near to the pilgrim every foot of his journey according to that word of the prophet: "In the wilderness shall waters break forth and streams in the desert." The realisation of the continuousness and nearness of the divine life, its free accessibility to all of us, is a primary truth of reli-

gion. It needs not to travel up to heaven for it, or to pierce down to the grave. It speaks on this wise: "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." The life which is so potent and so invigorating is near as the ether which environs and interpenetrates all things, in which stars and suns float, and which the stoutest material cannot exclude, which bathes every atom of every created thing. Do we say too much? We cannot, for of the divine life-power which surrounds us, flows through us, and is open to our use and our needs, the Apostle said: "In

Him, we live and move and have our being."

This divine life, so near at hand, is ever seeking fuller and freer entry into our spirits. Life and life more abundantly is sought to be made ours.

If this be so, mere consolations cannot be the final end of divine comfort. The end must be the invigorating and encouraging of the spirit with more and more of the divine life. The Godlike life must be ever more and more, the earthly life ever less and less. Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.

No Mere Consolation.

Not in mere soothing of sorrow, not in mere wiping away of tears, but in deeper consciousness of God, and of His full, free, and sustaining life does the true divine comfort consist.

Only as we keep this in mind shall we understand the comfort which Christ brought to the sorrowing Disciples. He gave them the supremest consolation of all. Death was shown to be a shadow, a powerless thing. He whom they saw die stood in the midst of them and said: "Peace be unto you." He whom they had lost was once more beside them. This

was the common feature of the consolation He brought to them all. And this was what was needed by all. No matter what form their sorrow had taken, it was the restored and living Christ whom they longed for. And so He was manifested to them: to Mary, as she stood at the sepulchre weeping; to Thomas, as he sat with the other Disciples; to Peter by the lakeside, or in that other interview of which we know so little; to the two Disciples as they took their sad walk towards Emmaus. The hearts which had yearned, each in their own manner, after Him

who was gone, were all satisfied. The Master was alive. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared."

But in the manner of His appearing and in His dealing with each sorrowful one, He wrought more for them than the consolation that He was alive. He remembered the needs of each, and He adapted the ministry of His appearing to the characters and spiritual requirements of each.

V

THE CONSISTENT INCONSISTENCY OF LOVE

THE narrative of the Forty Days shows us Christ as the supreme teacher. Teachers are various, but there are two classes of teacher who must ever be in a radical disagreement, because there is a profound difference of principle at the root of their methods. There is the teacher who has his system, and makes his system the one inflexible part of his method. Those whom he teaches must accept

his system; they must be thrown into the one mould, and all must come forth stamped with some impression. Legalistic races delight in their systems. The French minister who rejoiced to think that as he pulled out his watch every French child was learning the same lesson, was the very embodiment of the worship of system. These are the men who pride themselves on their consistency; every variety of treatment seems to them a sin, because it transgresses the rule of consistency. Such is the class of teachers who are profoundly legal, intensely sys-

tematic, the worshippers of an external form of consistency. Opposed to these are the teachers who look first at the pupil, and are ever ready to adjust their system to the pupil's need, capacity, and character. These teachers are aware that one of the profoundest facts respecting human beings lies in the subtle and wide-ranging varieties which may co-exist with the deepest and most indisputable harmonies of nature. All men are alike in blood, in mental and moral structure. One touch of nature reveals the kinship of mankind. But the charm of social life lies in the

existence of the constant and piquant differences which exist side by side with these deep and inalienable resemblances. The wise teacher, while realising these resemblances, will recognise also differences. His system will not be hard and inflexible. He will have no Procrustes-like system. He has men to deal with, and not merely things.

To this latter class our Lord belonged. Law made and could make nothing perfect. Systems were for dead things, not for living beings. He has no narrow reverence for consistency,

Christ a True Teacher.

His aim being always the highest goal of those with whom He dealt. He can afford to run the risk of being called inconsistent. Shallow natures cannot understand the noble readiness with which divergent methods are used by larger minds. They quarrel with the varieties which they do not understand. John comes neither eating nor drinking; they say he hath a devil. Christ comes eating and drinking, and they say, "Behold a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They could not appreciate the divine love which could deliver its message in

startlingly contrasted forms. But if the world is to be won, and if human nature is to be helped, hard and fast rules must be left aside. God's love is like the atmosphere which fills up all corners regardless of their shapes. It is like the flowing river which spreads its beauty into every creek, and fills the shallows as well as the deep holes in its course. It adjusts itself to the hearts which it visits. Its consistency lies in this, that it is the same to all. Its earnestness and thoughtfulness lie in this, that it adapts itself to all. It is the same pure, true, and beautiful

current wherever it goes; but it possesses the capacity for adapting itself to each. It is like the ether, rigid yet penetrating, as firm as steel and yet as flexible as the softest silk.

His Contrasted Action.

After this fashion Christ showed His love. He was unchangeable in purpose and changeful of method. We have only to put side by side His dealing with Mary and His dealing with Thomas. Both Mary and Thomas were alike in this — they would fain verify to their senses the presence of their risen Lord. Both sought the

evidence of touch to satisfy themselves that they were not deceived by their eyes. Thomas will demand their verification. "Except I put my hand into the print of the nails, I will not believe." Mary reaches forth her hand to assure herself that it is in very deed her Master who stands before her.

But our Lord treats them differently. He welcomes — nay, he insists — on the touch of Thomas. He checks the outstretched hand of Mary. To the one He says, "Reach hither thy hand." To the other: "Touch me not."

Here were very different pu-

pils in the school of faith. The action which would be good for the one would not be good for the other. Beyond our power of explanation, there were reasons for this difference in the moral condition and spiritual progress of the two persons. Even if we could not guess at the explanation, we should be content to believe that He who knew so profoundly our nature, and who understood with such tender individual interest the needs of each of His servants, varied His action as was best suited to the spiritual attainments of each.

We may guess at the reason for the difference. Thomas was possessed of that fond temperament

His Reason.

which out of his very affection found reasons for disbelieving what he most ardently wished to be true. To correct the weakness of such a desponding temperament is part of Christ's work. Can it be better done than by granting the very evidence which had been asked, and by giving it readily to awaken a sense of shame that it should ever have been demanded? Thomas is brought face to face with the littleness and lowness to which he had yielded

through the fierce demand prompted by his too ready despair. He is brought to see that there was a loftier path which he might have trod. He is driven to wish that he had not so unadvisedly resolved or expressed his resolve. A little patience, a little more trust, a little more cultivation of hopefulness would have spared him the shame of having his wishes fulfilled. More blessed would he have been had he been content to trust the larger love without this eager impatience for physical evidence. When we turn to Mary we meet with a wholly different character.

Love, genuine love to their Master, is the common property of both Disciples; but the temperament of Thomas was gloomy and despondent. Good news must come with decisive evidence if it is to be believed. Dark things are more likely than bright. Faith in the ever-ruling goodness is as yet but a hesitating sentiment. With Mary love was fond and ardent. It was not so much the desire for evidence which prompted her to reach forth her hand. It was the longing to feel the sweet nearness of the Lord for whose presence she yearned. With

Thomas, the verification sought was the verification of evidence. With Mary it was the assurance of affection. She yearned for the touch of the vanished hand as well as the sound of the voice which had been stilled. For her, therefore, a different lesson is needed. She stands a stage higher in the school of faith. She may move up a step more. The Master will not always be present to the sight or near to the touch of His Disciples. The spiritual presence must take the place of the physical. She is fitted to take the step forward into that life which is of faith,

not sight. It is an ascended Lord, whose presence can be in the hearts of His people though He Himself is unseen, who is to be her Lord henceforth. To her Christ seems to say: "Learn! for you are ripe to learn it, that the path of trust is often in the dark. Begin to walk that higher road which is so hard to earthly natures. Endeavour to do without material supports; cultivate the faith which needs not to see."

In this various treatment we see the depth of Christ's love and wisdom. He does not treat His disciples wholesale.

He calls his own sheep *by name.* He realises their individual needs; He adjusts His treatment to their characters.

VI

MANIFOLD ARE LOVE'S WAYS

THERE is much to be learned from Christ's methods of action. Love displays itself not only in doing good and kind things, but in its way of doing them. There is, therefore, not only something to be learned from the fact that He showed Himself to His Disciples, but from considering the meaning of those words of the Evangelist, "After this manner He showed Himself." He chose His own

way of manifestation, and His own way had its meaning and use.

We need to dwell on this variety that we may grasp its significance. Sometimes He appears to the Disciples when gathered together, as in the place where "they were assembled for fear of the Jews." Sometimes He appears to one Disciple alone, as to Mary at the sepulchre and to Peter; sometimes to two friends together, as to the two on their way to Emmaus. Sometimes He appears while His Disciples are conversing; at other times when they are working. No

time or place or occupation seems to exclude His coming. He reveals Himself to His Disciples in the various conditions of their life and thoughts. This variety of His action teaches us two things:

He forbids our limiting the manifestation of Christ to one method only. This has been a weakness of some Christian teachers. They have imagined that as Christ came to them, so He would come to others. The truth is that our poor weak minds cling to places we know and to methods with which we are familiar; we measure Him and His ways by our own small

range, as though His thoughts must be as our thoughts, and His ways as our ways. One imagines that it is only in solitude that Christ will be found. Each soul must go out into its wilderness. Far from the world and its stunning noises, far from men and their distracting influences, the vision of the Lord can be seen, and only when we have cut ourselves away from our fellows will the Lord come. It is true that He has come thus to many. Solitude has been found a sanctuary by many souls. But it is not true that He only comes there. Did he not warn

His Disciples against the limitations of His way of coming? Did he not tell of those who would cry, "Behold, He is in the desert"? And did he not say, "Go not after them, neither follow them"?

He does, indeed, come to sad and solitary souls. Weeping Mary finds Him near when she deems herself alone. But He comes also when men are gathered together in brotherly counsel and affection. While they discuss matters of common interest and common danger Jesus Himself stands in the midst of them. This can hardly surprise us. Was it not the

fulfilment of His own promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them"?

But though this is true, they speak falsely who would say, "Only where the Disciples are gathered together is Christ found." He seeks out the lonely and sad-hearted Peter: "The Lord is risen and hath appeared unto Simon."

He comes to those who are in the desert, but the desert does not command Him. He comes to those who are in the upper room, but the upper room does not command Him. He appears to those who jour-

ney from Jerusalem, but the Emmaus road does not command Him. The force which draws Him is that which drew Him to earth. It is that which drew Him to the side of men while He was ministering before He suffered. It is human need which draws Him near to man. It is to hungering souls that He comes. The state of the spirit has more to do with His coming than the place or the company in which we chance to be. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," He said; and in saying this He taught us that men saw Him or saw Him not according to

their spiritual dispositions, and not according to their geographical position. He set Himself against all localising ideas. Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem. Spiritual things were above terrestrial limits. They were governed by spiritual, not by terrestrial considerations. "In spirit and in truth" the Father was to be worshipped. Men need not to ask where they are, but only what they are in spirit. If the spirit be right, the vision is theirs. The pure in heart may see Him. To the loving and obedient soul He will manifest Himself. Light springs up

for the righteous, and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted. Thus, whether on the highroad, or in the place of assembly, or at the graveside, He may be met with. True hearts may meet Him anywhere, everywhere.

II. But, none the less, this variety teaches us His tender thought for special and individual needs. It was best for Mary that she should meet her Lord by the empty tomb. There where her sorrow seemed greatest her comfort came. There are heart-sorrows with which no stranger may intermeddle, and in which earthly

friends seem to have no real part. We feel that we must carry it away with us to the spot most sacred to memory. In such cases the consolation comes fittest in solitude.

Other cases need different help. When the Disciples were drawn together by their common sorrow, common peril, and common perplexity, no manifestation of Christ to the individual would have sufficed. The presence of their Lord was a common presence; they all saw Him; they all recognised Him. He was the Lord of all, seen of all, and by His presence binding all into a brotherhood

as real and as indissoluble as their common sorrow and common danger had bound them. Thus He consecrates and confirms His presence in collective worship. We may look for Him where His people are gathered together, not because it is this place or that, but because they are gathered together in His name.

VII

GRACE SANCTIONS AND SANCTIFIES NATURAL TIES

THERE are certain human conditions which Christ appears to me to have recognised in His methods of manifestation.

I. He recognises human friendships.

It is as the two friends (for who can doubt their attachment?) walk and speak sadly together that Jesus Himself drew nigh. We read the story and we recognise all that Christ taught them concerning the

Scriptures and Himself. But does he not teach them and us how friendship may be sanctified?

One fatal foe of friendship is that reserve which creates an artificiality of sentiment. We meet, but we do not commune of all that is in our souls. We feel that to speak with entire frankness will be to lose some measure of esteem. If we express what we really think and feel we shall be viewed with suspicion; our orthodoxy will be impeached; we shall be considered erratic; we shall be spoken of as dangerous, as persons with undecided or

misty views. We do not, perhaps, wish to shock our friends; we know their views, and we would not willingly wound them. There may be some self-denial in this reserve; but there may arise from it an atmosphere of unreality, and where this exists friendship in the deeper and truer sense becomes impossible. For real friendship there must be real confidence, and no tinge of suspicion that the frank outspokenness of the heart will be misunderstood or misrepresented. No really tender-hearted man will lightly shock his friend or wound his soul by posing as better or

worse than he is; but, nevertheless, friendship needs the freest intercourse, the difficulties, the misgivings, the perplexities of the mind may be told; there is a calm and frank telling of doubts which can never be misunderstood, for it is the pledge of earnestness and sincerity.

And so the two friends on their way to Emmaus told all their thoughts and doubts to one another. They communed with one another. Divine hopes and beliefs had been their common treasure. The shadows of the present hour of darkness were theirs also. They shared

their souls with one another. They sought no veil or concealment. In this way they came nearest to helping one another.

It was to such friends that Christ drew near. Honest seekers after truth may thus find truth together. Friendship is sanctified when something is sought which is even greater than friendship, even that divine heart of all things which is the stay and the source of all friendship. Jesus Christ, in recognising their friendship, taught that a simple and true-hearted attachment, which has other aims than mere egotistic

satisfaction, can exercise an ennobling influence. To be united in the pursuit of truth tends to strengthen affection. Where such attachments are, Christ is not far off.

But this friendship was not the only one our Lord recognised. There was another friendship which we must have noticed among the Disciples. Peter and John had just those points of resemblance and of difference which so often become the bonds of friendship. There was a measure of vehemence in both. The impetuosity of St. Peter is paralleled by the eagerness of St. John.

Peter could not endure to think of his Master suffering humiliation. "That be far from Thee, Lord" (Matt. xvi. 22). John could not endure to see his Master rejected, and would fain call down fire upon those who did not receive Him (Luke ix. 51–56). But there was a strain of quiet thoughtfulness about John which Peter lacked. Peter was the Martha of the Apostles; John was its Mary. Between them grew a special friendship. They understood one another. If a question is to be asked, or a remark of rapid insight to be expressed, they address one another nat-

urally, as though sure of sympathetic response (John xiii. 24 and xxi. 7).

Jesus Christ recognised this friendship also. It is characteristic of Peter that his first question after his forgiveness and restoration was a question respecting John, "Lord, what shall this man do?" The reply sounds hard. It sounds as though our Lord would check the warmth of this attachment. "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

In weighing this reply, something must be allowed for Peter's mental balance at the moment, and what it required. He had

been relieved from the tension of those days of anxiety and suspense. With the sense of relief, he a little lost his self-control, and, like a man from whom a great weight has fallen, he was tempted to speak for the sake of speaking, and to speak without full reflection. His eye rested on his friend, and he burst out with the question, "What shall this man do?" At such moments decisiveness of manner and language is helpful in restoring the half-lost balance of the mind. Christ, therefore, recalls Peter to himself by reminding him that there are

matters which it is not for him to know.

And yet, when we allow our Lord's reply further thought, we begin to realise how fully it meant this: "Your friend is in my hands. I may have a will concerning him and his future. You may surely trust him to me. Do your work, and believe that I have charge of what you hold so dear." Thus with rebuke there mingles reassurance. The answer, which the heart of Peter asked for, is given. He may trust that all will be well with his friend, though he may not know what future is in store for him.

It is God's way to ask us to trust not only ourselves, but what is far harder, our friends, in His keeping. And this for a simple reason — viz., that we may realise that however strong our love for our friends may be, the divine love is more. If we realise the depth and intensity, the wisdom and persistency of the love of God, we shall recognise that our questions, and at times even our prayers, on their behalf, are only exhibitions of the nakedness of our faith. God has His way and His work with every human soul. That way is wise. That work is good. A love

greater than ours presides over it all. The more completely we understand this, the fewer will our questions be. When faith is perfect, at that day we shall ask Him nothing. St. Peter learned a stronger trust as time went on. He could urge it upon his fellow-Christians. It was not necessary to know everything and to see everything. It was only needful to rely on the unseen Christ and His love. "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The man who wrote

thus is far removed from the man who asked, "What shall this man do?" But though far removed from his former self, he is none the less firmly and constantly attached to his friend. Faith gives sanctity and security to friendship.

II. Christ recognises the active and contemplative life. He makes manifest Himself to those who are meditating and to those who are working.

1. He showed Himself to those who were working. On the seashore, where the Disciples were toiling at their old trade of fishing, He appeared to them. There is nothing in-

compatible in toil with a divine revelation. Jeremiah found the word of the Lord in the potter's house, while the potter wrought his work upon the wheel. Christ in His earlier ministry appeared to the fishermen on the Lake of Galilee. It may have been a faithless despair which led Peter to resume his old trade; but there was nothing in the trade itself to hinder the vision of Christ. We often complain that work excludes us from the calm light of heaven. Ah! it is not work, but worldliness, which shuts out Christ. Work wherever God has called us is a blessed thing,

and in the doing of it we may meet our Lord.

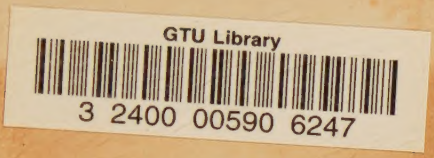
2. He showed Himself to those who were plunged in thought. While Mary was revolving the problem which perplexed her in the graveyard, Christ appeared to her; while the two were exchanging their thoughts and meditating upon all that had happened in Jerusalem, Jesus Himself drew near.

He thus sanctions the two aspects of life. Life which has no contemplation, no leisure for quiet meditation, is so far incomplete. Life which is cut off from activity, is life which

misses much teaching. It is best when both are combined —when he who works can pray, and he who prays can work also; it is best so for the soul. Thought without work degenerates into theory; work without thought is weariness and often profitlessness. And yet when in the course of God's ordaining the worker is laid aside, or when, in the press of thronging duties, no leisure for thought is left, there need be no room or reason for despair. Such are not forsaken of Christ. The urgent duties may be bright with the light and joy of heaven, and the lonely cham-

ber of the invalid may be the home of Christ.

Thus does the risen Lord show us that all sorts and conditions of life are within His care and His ken. The recognitions of His presence may be seldom; the moments when we can rejoice in the light of His countenance may be rare; but the conviction of His presence may be a perpetual strength, and the knowledge of His love a sustaining force in every task and trial which we may be called upon to encounter.



GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.